



ADMINISTRATION AND REGULATORY AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT

Transportation Section Policy

Subject: **Third-Party Vehicle Inspections**

Policy No.

VFH - 011

Effective Date:

Upon Approval

1. AUTHORITY

- 1.1 Chapter 46, Houston Code of Ordinances

2. PURPOSE

- 2.1 The purpose of the policy is to establish guidelines for the approval of third-party vehicle inspections for vehicles-for-hire pursuant to Section 46-514 of the City of Houston Code of Ordinances, and any other sections as amended by City Council.

3. POLICY STATEMENT

ARA regulates all vehicles-for-hire to ensure the health and safety of the riding public and to encourage the operation of professional transportation services in the Houston area. To this end, all vehicles used in vehicle-for-hire operations are required to undergo an annual physical inspection for roadworthiness and compliance with ordinance regulations. In the interest of expediting the inspection process to allow for growth in the vehicle-for-hire industry, in August 2014, City Council amended Chapter 46 of the Houston Code of Ordinances to provide the authority for ARA to designate third-party entities to perform vehicle-for-hire inspections based on specific criteria set out by ARA that would conform to the standards and procedures already established for vehicle-for-hire inspections.

4. PROCEDURES

- 4.1 The policy will be effective from the date of signature and expire upon date of any replacing or overriding Ordinance provision and/or new Director's Rule and Regulation.
- 4.2 This policy applies to all inspections performed pursuant to the requirements of Section 46-514 of the City of Houston Code of Ordinances.
- 4.3 The Director may authorize an entity or several entities to conduct third-party inspections as defined herein.
- 4.4 In order to be authorized to conduct vehicle-for-hire inspections, an entity must meet both of the following criteria:
- a) Hold one or more of the following certifications: Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) Certified Technician, ASE Certified Master Technician, or ASE Certified Structural Analysis & Damage Repair Technician.

Approved:

Date Approved:

11/3/2014

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- b) Be certified by the State of Texas to perform vehicle safety inspection. An exemption to the above requirements is hereby authorized for all governmental entities.

4.5

The vehicle-for-hire inspection must include, without limitation, the following items:

- a) Foot brake: Ensure the vehicle brake lights activate when the brakes are engaged.
- b) Parking/Emergency brake: Ensure the vehicle parking/emergency brake engages when the vehicle is placed in reverse and the driver's foot is taken off the foot brake.
- c) Steering mechanism: Ensure the steering mechanism adequately maneuvers the vehicle.
- d) Windshield: Ensure the windshield is free of cracks within the driver's line of sight as per State Law.
- e) Rear window and other glass: All glass coating and sun screening devices shall comply with the Texas Motor Vehicle Laws under the Transportation Code, Sections 547.608 and 547.609. The sun screening device may not be bubbled, visibly distorted or faded. Check all windows for damage that may create a risk to the passenger's health and safety.
- f) Windshield wipers: Inspect for satisfactory operation to clean rain, snow, or other moisture from the windshield.
- g) Headlights, Parking lights and License Plate light: Inspect for presence and condition of required lamp(s) and component(s).
- h) Tail lights and reverse lights: Inspect for presence and condition of required lamp(s) and component(s).
- i) Turn indicator lights and emergency flashers: Inspect for the presence and condition of required lamp(s) and component(s).
- j) Stop lights: Inspect for presence and condition of required lamp(s) and component(s).
- k) Front seat adjustment mechanism: Ensure that the front seat can be adequately adjusted to fit the needs of each driver.
- l) Doors (open, close, lock): All vehicles shall have doors that are fully functional from both the inside and outside of the vehicle, as manufactured. All armrest and door trim panels shall be present and reasonably clean. Missing, broken, or significantly damaged parts that affect the operation or safety of the vehicle or the passenger's comfort must be repaired or replaced. All door locks (manual, mechanical or electrical) shall function as originally manufactured. Knobs and handles shall be present and fully functional as OEM.
- m) Horn: Ensure that the vehicle's horn is in good working order, capable of emitting a sound audible for a distance of two hundred (200) feet or more, and does not emit an unreasonably loud or harsh sound.
- n) Speedometer: Ensure that the speedometer accurately reflects the speed of the vehicle.
- o) Bumpers: Ensure both bumpers are present and fully functional as OEM. Ensure there are no missing portions, rust, or sharp corners.
- p) Muffler and exhaust system: Examine the efficiency of the system while the engine is running. All components of the exhaust system shall be securely mounted to the vehicle as originally manufactured. No motor vehicle shall be operated in a manner resulting in the escape of excessive smoke, flames, gas, oil, fuel residue or noise.
- q) Condition of tires and wheels, including tread depth: Inspect for proper type and safe operating condition. Reject if tread wear indicators contact the road. Ensure that all wheels and or rims are not cracked or damaged, including no broken lug nuts.
- r) Interior and exterior rear view mirrors: Inspect for presence and condition of rear and side mirrors.
- s) Safety belts for driver and passengers: Inspect seat belts for frayed, split or torn webbing; malfunctioning buckles; and loose or damaged anchorage or floor pan.

- t) Heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning systems: All vehicles must be equipped with air conditioning and heating equipment operating within manufacturer's specifications.
 - u) Interior and Exterior Appearance: Ensure the interior is reasonably clean and clear of debris and personal items. Ensure the exterior of the vehicle is free from major damage that endangers the riding public and that the condition of the paint is free of chips, cracks or major other imperfections.
- 4.6 The authorized entity shall record the following information: the Vehicle Identification Number, Vehicle Year, Vehicle Make, Vehicle Model, License Plate Number, Vehicle Capacity, Mileage, Color, State Inspection Expiration Date, and State Registration Expiration date.
- 4.7 The inspection details and results shall be noted in writing and a copy of the completed record provided to ARA by the approved entity via fax, email, or some other pre-approved, secure, method. A secure method is one which allows the City to verify that the results of an inspection have not been tampered with or manipulated in any way. ARA must approve all forms for this purpose.
- 4.8 It is the responsibility of the permittee to pay for the inspection. The City of Houston will not be liable for any payments to the authorized entity.
- 4.9 The certification decal shall be placed on the vehicle by ARA personnel only in conjunction with proof that the vehicle has successfully passed an inspection conducted in accordance with the requirements of this policy. ARA personnel will survey each vehicle prior to placement of the decal. In the event that ARA personnel believe a vehicle does not comply with the requirements of Chapter 46, whether because a third-party inspection has not been conducted correctly, or a vehicle was approved by the third-party inspector in error, or for any other reason, ARA reserves the right to thoroughly re-inspect the vehicle prior to placing the certification decal on the vehicle, and/or disallow the vehicle altogether.
- 4.10 Third parties failing to fully comply with this policy shall be de-authorized for further inspections.
- 4.11 A permittee must submit the following items to the Director for the approval of third-party vehicle inspections under this policy:
- a) A letter from the permittee on company letterhead identifying the chosen inspection facility and method for submitting the completed inspection form to ARA
 - b) A letter from the inspection facility on company letterhead detailing its qualifications and explaining how it meets the requirements of this policy
 - c) A copy of the inspection form to be used. The form must include the inspection facility's letterhead, stamp, seal or other such proof indicating the inspection was performed by the approved inspection entity.
- 4.12 The City recognizes that from November 4, 2014 to December 31, 2014, between 5,000 and 7,000 TNC drivers, and vehicles, may be licensed by the City. Each vehicle shall be presented to City of Houston, ARA Department personnel for placement of the City of Houston TNC decal. Upon presentation of the vehicle to ARA personnel, vehicles will be surveyed to ensure the third party inspection was performed according to the requirements of this policy. In the interest of preventing a substantial backlog, and recognizing that ARA personnel will essentially audit the results of the third-party inspection facility, for the period designated above the secure submission method requirements of paragraph 4.7 will be suspended, and drivers will be permitted to bring the inspection form directly to the ARA department.